

The Story Behind Violin Sonata #9, Op 47, ~~“Bridgetower”~~ “Kreutzer”

Beethoven composed Violin Sonata No. 9, Op. 47 in 1803—a piece now known as the “Kreutzer” sonata. It is part of today’s standard solo repertoire, and known for being fiendishly difficult. The premiere was performed by Beethoven on piano and his then friend, violinist George Bridgetower. The two men would have a falling out, and Beethoven would re-dedicate this piece to violinist Rudolphe Kreutzer, who probably never performed it.

Fast Facts about George Bridgetower.



- George’s mother was from Eastern Europe (possibly Poland) and his father was from the Caribbean Islands (possibly an escaped slave from Barbados).
- George was a child prodigy—a violinist, composer, and spoke at least 5 languages. Young George performed in various European courts, and amazed royal audiences much as Mozart did.
- Besides being friends with Beethoven, Bridgetower grew up in the same Esterházy court that Haydn worked for, as George’s father was a servant of the court.
- Beethoven and Bridgetower played the first performance of this violin sonata with no rehearsal. The piece had only been finished a few hours before, so Bridgetower was basically sightreading.
- Beethoven and Bridgetower had their final disagreement when Bridgetower said something impolite (no one knows exactly what) about a woman Beethoven knew.

Information about Bridgetower, Beethoven, and the sonata are embedded in the photograph (last page of this document) from the [Beethoven-Haus](#) Museum in Bonn, Germany. Move your cursor over each item in the photograph to discover more about the music and the people.

- Framed photo of Joshua Bell and Yuja Wang at the back – link to an amazing video performance!
- Music on the piano - link to sheet music on IMSLP
- Piano keys – link to video explanation of the sonata story
- Portrait of Bridgetower – link to short video of his life
- Portrait of Beethoven – link to short video of his life
- Violin in case under Bridgetower – link to longer bio (text) via AfriClassical

George Bridgetower was one of the most popular violinists of his day. He was known all over Europe to royalty, the extremely wealthy, and many other famous musicians. Today, few people know his name.

Brainstorm several reasons why you think George Bridgetower might not be very well known today, then think aloud with a partner or small group before sharing your ideas in a class discussion.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

On the other hand, why do you suppose Beethoven is still held with such high regard, 250 years after his birth?

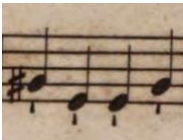
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Watch the amazing performance of Violin Sonata #9, Op 47 by [Joshua Bell and Yuja Wang](#)! List 10 things you notice about their technique and/or musicality.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Following the performance, think aloud with a partner or small group. What did you notice? Bring your ideas to a class discussion.

Foundations. Download the sheet music to the first movement of the sonata from [IMSLP](https://imslp.org/). Find and define the following music terms.

Term	Measure found (at least one instance)	Definition
<i>pp</i>		
<i>p</i>		
<i>f</i>		
<i>ff</i>		
<i>fp</i>		
<i>sfp</i>		
<i>sf</i>		
<i>crescendo (cres)</i>		
<i>decrescendo (decres)</i>		
Adagio		
Adagio sostenuto		
Presto		
A tempo		
Tempo I		
<i>ritardando</i>		
<i>rallentando</i>		
dolce		
Trill (tr)		
 <p>(note with a dot over or under it)</p>		